# Longsword Sequences from Paulus Hector Mair's Longsword Treatise (c. 1550)

Transcribed and translated by Lawrence Delaney

Higgins Armory Sword Guild

# INTRODUCTION

J. L. Forgeng

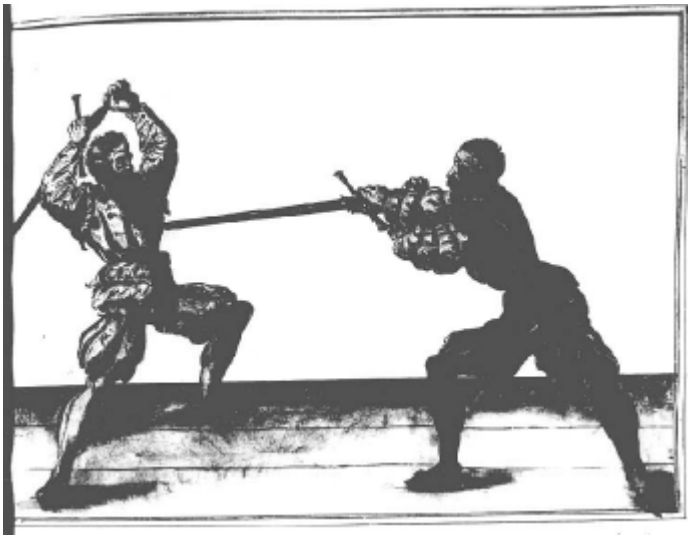
Paulus Hector Mair (1517-79) was a municipal civil servant in the Bavarian city of Augsburg, active during the mid-1500s (he was hanged in 1579 at the age of 62 for having misappropriated city funds). Augsburg during the sixteenth century was perhaps the single greatest center for the study and production of German martial arts treatises: Mair collected at least 8 manuscripts on the subject, and produced three handsomely illustrated manuscripts of his *Fechtbuch*, currently in Dresden, Munich, and Vienna; a fourth, partly by Mair, resides in Augsburg. The books cover a broad range of weapons forms, including longsword, dusack, halberd, quarterstaff, dagger, wrestling, rapier, sickle, and flail. The Dresden and Augsburg texts are in German; the Munich text is in Latin; the Vienna manuscript has both Latin and German.

Mair's longsword system is very much in the traditional German school; many of the techniques he mentions for the longsword can be documented as far back as the earliest surviving longsword text, Johannes Liechtenauer's verses (written sometime before 1389). Some new features have been added to the system since the texts of the late 15$^{th}$ century, but the older features are still very much present: for example, thrusting remains a part of Mair's system, where it has been largely abandoned by Meyer. Mair's longsword material consists of a series of about 120 devices, each with an illustration, followed by a copy of the "Von Danzig Fechtbuch" commentary on Liechtenauer. The devices include a series of "half-sword" techniques that appear to be an unarmored martial-arts derivative of earlier armored combat. Overall, it is clear that the immediate context of his work is the martial arts schools of Augsburg, even though many of the techniques clearly reflect the styles of life-and-death longsword combat of the Middle Ages.

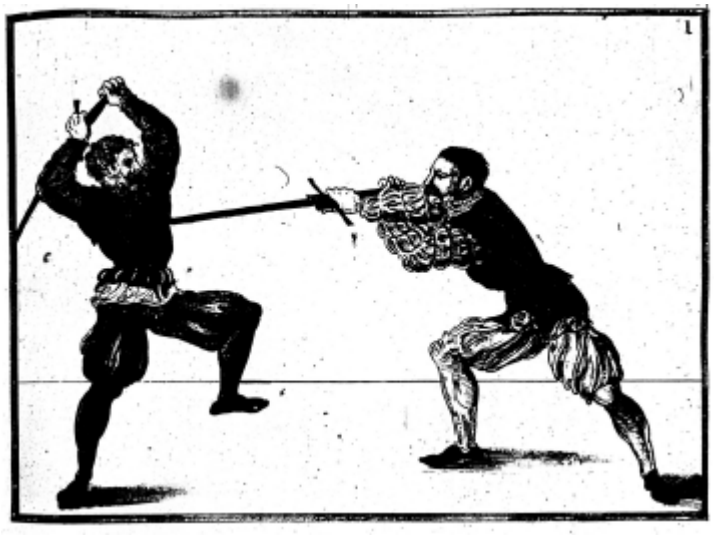
Mair is unusual among the German sources in giving both sides of each combat; this fact, combined with his substantial text, Latin translation, illustrations, and martial-arts context, make him a particularly promising source for the modern practitioner.

Page references are by leaf, and side (recto or verso) of the longsword section of the Vienna manuscript. Note that places marked with an * indicate points where the digital image of the text is illegible.

[*1r*]



[Vienna]



[Munich]

**De ictu qui ex ira nomen fortitur contra mucronem**

Hac ratione te ad hunc ictum adaptabis: sinistrum dextro pedi prepones, inque ipso ictu dextro sequere, feriasque fortiter superius latus sinistrum versus. Verum si se opposuerit, ictuque tuo restiterit, tum quam celerimme proximam nuditatem peto*. Si vero referiat iratus, tum ad ictum eum qui ex ira fit, te prepara in mucronem pendentem et eum converte recta *in faciem vel pectus adversarii. Sin autem animadverterit id, gladium supra caput elevabis, assiliesque pede dextro in latus *eius sinistrum et petas ictu transversario caput eius. Si vero is hoc usus fuerit

contra te, brachiis crucis instar consituto, tum ictum longa acie excipe, et statim gladium averte, tuumque mucronem ex sinistro latere contra ipsius *faciem flecte seu pectus

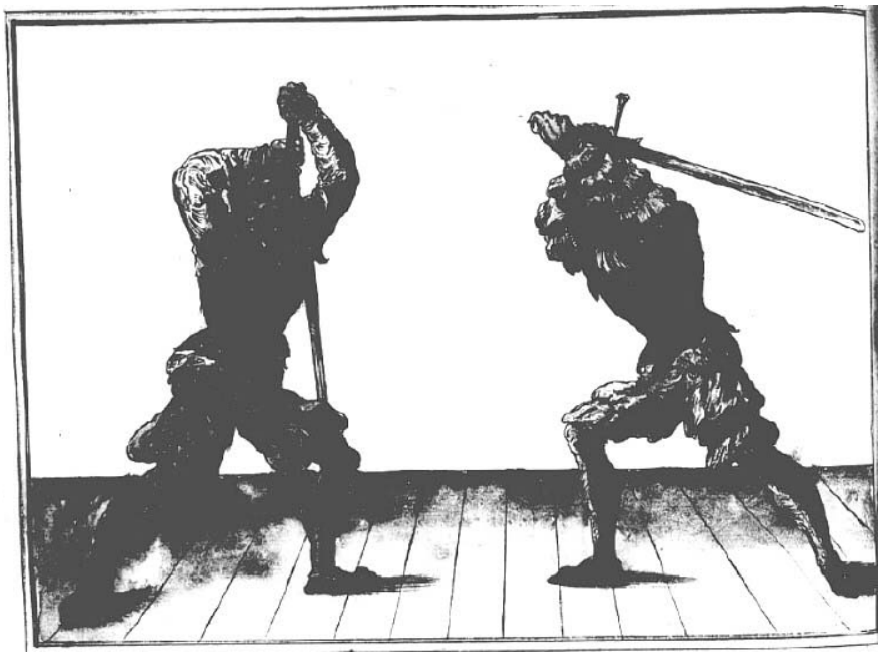
**About the blow which acquires its name from Wrath against the tip**

--In this manner you will conduct yourself in this blow: place the left foot before the right, and in the blow itself follow with the right foot, and you strongly strike above toward the left side. But if he opposes it, and resists your blow, at that time as fast as possible seek the nearest opening.

--But if he strikes a Wrath Blow, then position yourself in the Hanging Point against the Wrath Blow and turn your sword into the face or chest of your enemy. But if he perceives it, you will elevate your sword above your head, and spring toward his life side with your right foot and seek his head with the Thwart Blow.

--But if he uses this against you, having your arms positioned in a cross, then parry the blow with the long edge and at once turn [*German:* pull] your sword and wind your tip from the left side against his face or chest.

[*Iv*]



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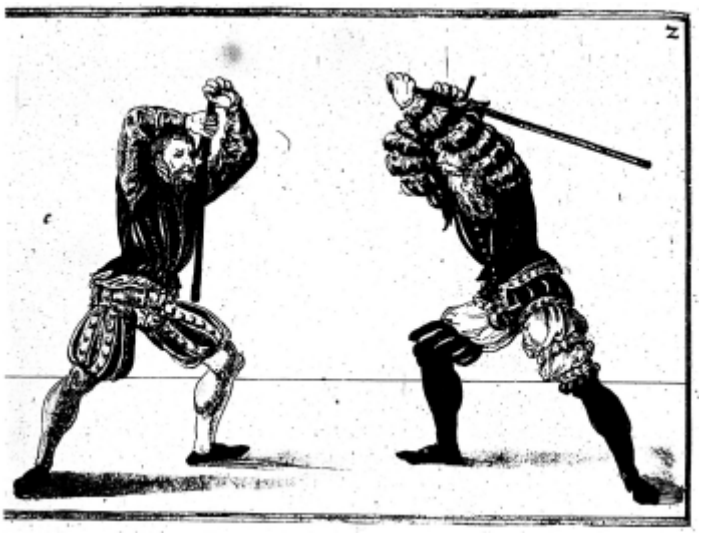


[Munich]

**Ictus qui curvus dicitur ex utroque latere**

Si in adversarii conspectum gladiando prope accesseris, sinistrum prepones pedem fac memineris, contineasque ensem tuum mucrone in dextro tuo latere constituto, et pedem siste arrepte manibus ictum curvum, et si feriat e supernis versus nuditatem tuam adversarius tum dextro tuo calce precede, illiusque ceu per ambages appropinquabis lateri dextro, feriasque

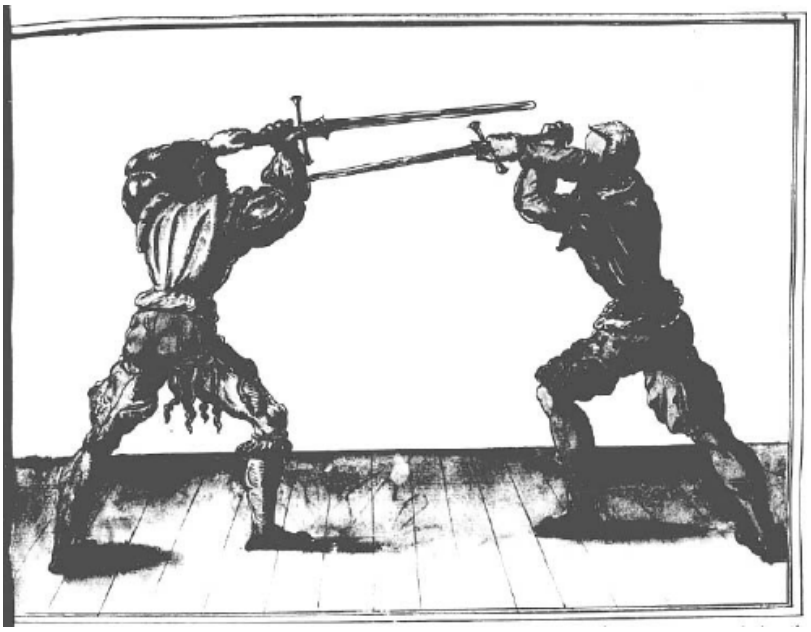
versus proximam eius nuditatem. Verum si per ambages aggrediatur te dextrum pedem preponente in ictu etiam qui dicitur curvus, tum levo progredere, et ictum acie ensis tui longa excipe et sine mora dextra sequere pede ictuque curvo referias eius ensem, aciem brevem tuo protendente gladio, itaque caput eius sauciabis.

**The blow which is called Crooked from both sides**

--If you approach wielding a sword in the presence of an adversary, make sure you put your left foot forward, and hold your sword with the point having been positioned on your right side, plant your foot having delivered a Crooked Blow with your hands; and if the opponent strikes against your opening, then advance on your right foot and approach as if through a circuitous path toward his right side, and strike against his nearest opening.

--But if he attacks you through a circuitous route, you having your right foot forward and you are also in the crooked blow, then advance on your left and parry the blow with the long edge of you sword; and without delay follow with your right foot and strike back against his sword with the Crooked Blow, extending the short edge of your sword, and thus you will wound his head.

[*2r*]



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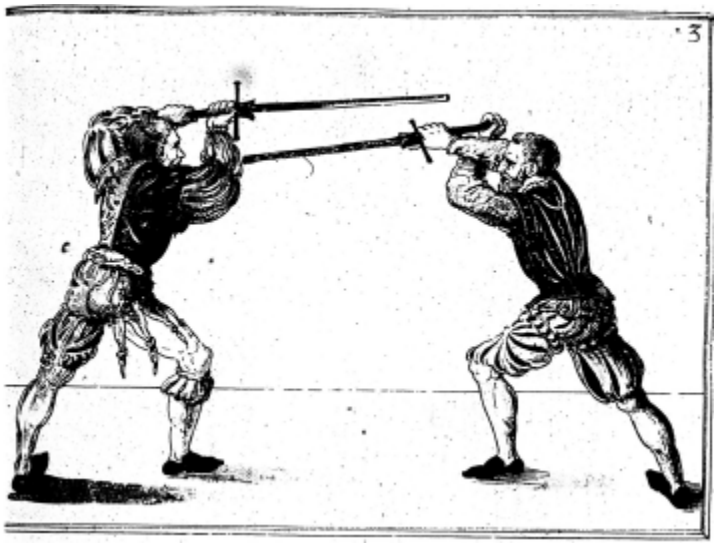



[Munich]

**Ictus transversarius ex utroque latere**

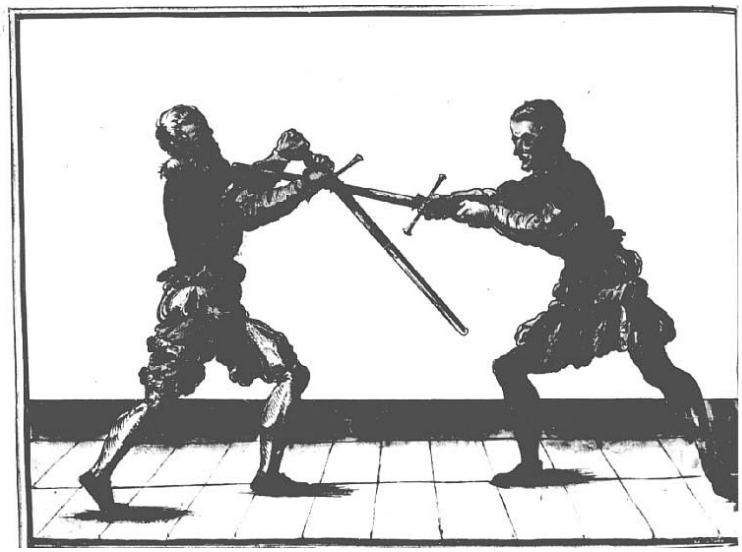
Si quando ense gubernando ad adversarium perveneris pede dextro prefixo, versumque te acie breve conversa, levo statim sequere, ferias transversim manibus instar crucis ordinatis. Cum ictum exceperit, inflectas in locum infirmiorem, infirmior ensis locus dicitur mucroni proximus, qui infra medium ensis consistit, atque acie longa ferias versum superiorem nuditatem hostis. Si vero pede sinistro preposito constiteris, teque constitueris in ictum transversarium contra eum

brachiis cancellatis, dextro progredere, manus tuas permuta ut ense plavido* coram eo consistas, atque ictu predicto ferias versus aurem illius levam. Sin eum exceperit gladio suo hostis, duplici ictu, qui corpus non attingat, referias, verticemque sinistre capitis partis petas.

**The Thwart Blow from Both Sides**

--If at any time for the purpose of wielding the sword you come to the opponent with the right foot placed in front and with the short edge turned against you, at once follow with the left (foot), strike with a Thwart with the hands positioned crosswise. When he parries the blow, wind into his foible (the foible of the sword is the place nearest the point, which stands below the middle of the sword), and with the long edge strike against the upper opening of the enemy. But if you stand with the left foot placed in front and you have placed yourself into the Thwart Blow against him with crossed arms, move forward with the right foot, turn your hands so that you will stand with the flat of the blade facing him, and strike with the aforesaid blow against his left ear. If the enemy parries with his sword, strike with a double blow, which does not touch the body [*German:* double Failing Cut], and seek the left part of the crown of the head.

[2v]



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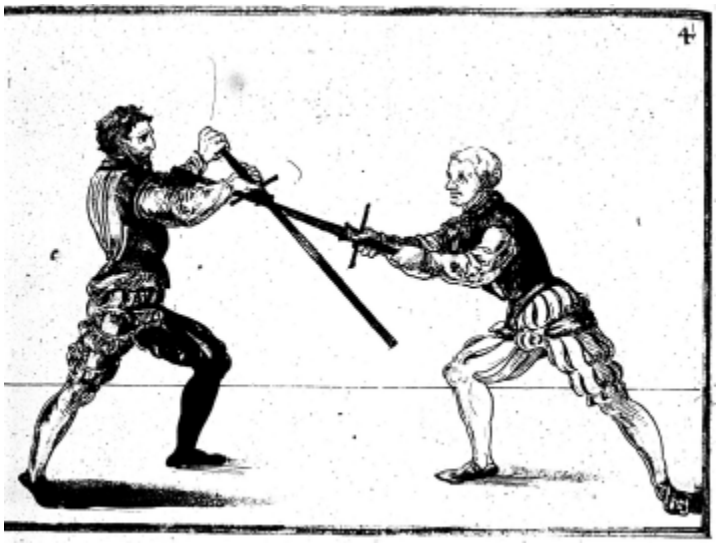


[Munich]

**Ictus qui latinis a limis oculis aut Strabonibus nomen adeptus est utrinque**

Quum in adversarii conspectum gladiando accesseris, levum propone conversa acie brevi inferne, dextro consequere* flecteque nodulum ensis tui sub dextrum brachium directo in eum mucrone. Sin ipse eodem contra te fuerat usus, excipito, et flecte in transuersarium, ense tuo versum dextrum latus propendente, ac sinistro fac consequare, mucronem* impellas intra ipsius brachia, ita tamen, ut acies brevis superior consistat. Idipsum si usurparit adversarius, longa acie tua id refringes, eamque* vim ipsius supprime, atque loco infirmiori protenso, acie longa capiti eius appropinquabis*.

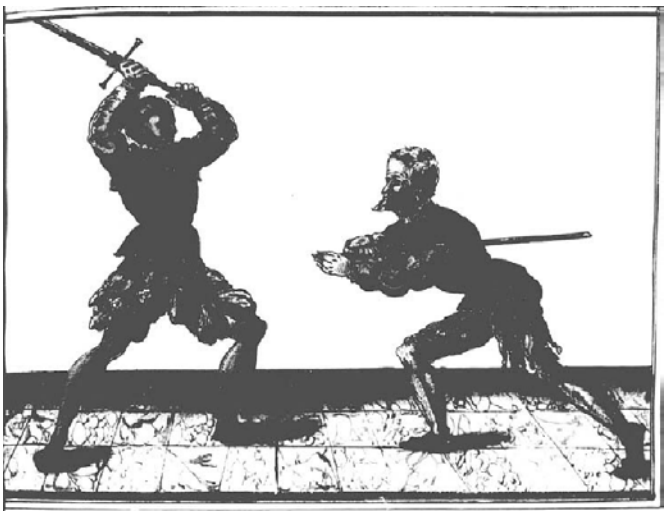
**The blow which in Latin receives its name from the sidelong look or squinting, on both sides.**

--When you approach wielding a sword before your opponent, place the left foot before with the short edge turned down, follow with the right foot and wind the pommel of your sword under your right arm with the tip directed at him.

--But if uses the same against you, parry and wind into a Thwart, with your sword hanging toward your right side, and follow with the left foot, send the tip between his arms such that the short edge stands above.

--If your opponent uses the same against you, parry it with the long edge and suppress his impetus downward and having extended the foible you will approach his head with the long edge.

[*3r*]



[Vienna]

[Munich]

**Ictus quo vertex appetitur**

Levum crus prepone, ensemque tuum erectis manibus supra caput tolles, insiliasque dextro ad adversarium atque recta acie longa ferias contra verticem eius, et mucronem inclina versus faciem vel eius pectus. Sin vero habitu eodem contra te fuerit usus, excipito eo modo, ut utramque ensis partem manibus contineas, sinistra ensem, dextra capulum* hoc modo mucronem, ut capuli ensium utrique erecti consistant, et si sursum regat, mucronem tuum, tum ensis tuus sub ipsius corona acie transeat versa in brachia, eoque pacto brachium utrunque

stringes. Et si contigerit ut is te eodem modo strinxerit, pede dextro regredere, incisionemque hostis curvo averte, aciem brevem premittendo, eaque dextrum eius latus proscinde.

**The blow by which the top of the head is sought.**

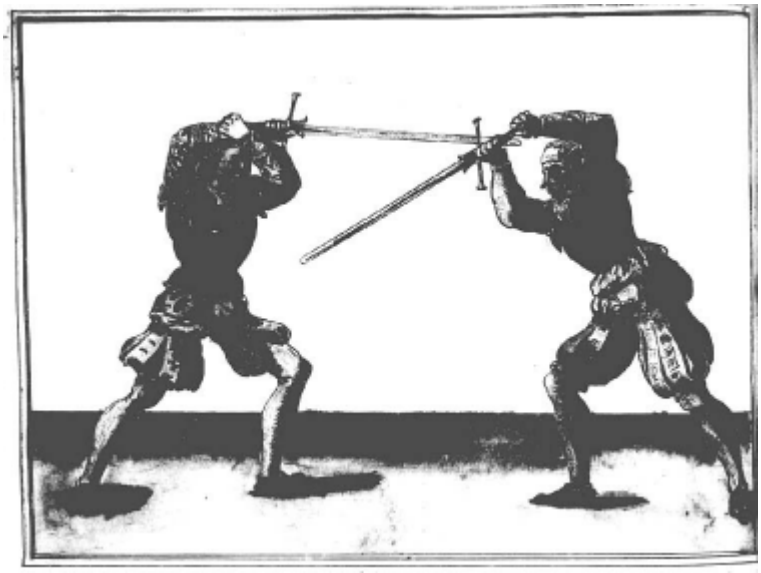
--Place your left leg forward, and having raised your hands, bear your sword above your head, and on your right leg spring toward the opponent and strike with the long edge of your sword directly against his scalp, and drop the tip against either his face or his chest.

--But if he uses the same technique against you, parry his tip in such a way that you hold both parts of the sword with your hands, the sword with your left hand, the hilt with the right hand, so that the hilts of the sword stand raised.

--And if he sends your tip upwards, then go across with your sword under his Crown, the edge having been turned against his arm and in this way, slice both his arms.

--And if it should happen that he slices you in the same way, retreat on the right foot and avert the enemy's slice with the Crooked Cut, leading with your short edge, and slice his right side with your short edge.

[*3v*]



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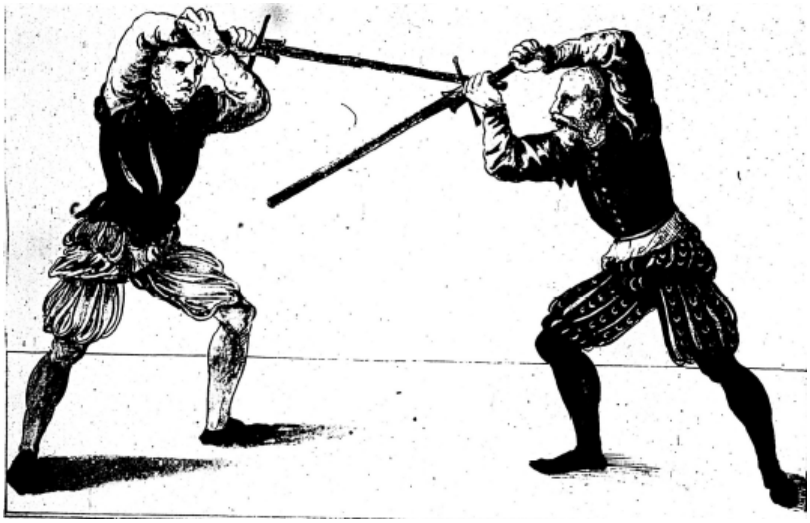


[Munich]

**Ictus qui latinis Bos a furore Boum sumptus ab utroque latere**

Ad huius modi ictum hoc modo te accommodabis, sinistrum pedem preponas, ensemque contineas manibus cancellatis supra caput, inflecte te, et dextro consiste in latus adversarii dextrum, si animadverterit gladium *propendentem, manibus transversis ferias transversarium. Sed si is eodem fuerit ictu usus, excipito, inque ipso articulo inflecte, mucronemque versus

faciem eius vel pectus  protende, atque acerrime  versus caput eius ferire memineris, eo vero excipiente, duplici ictu quo corpus non contingas adversarii utere. Promptissime supra commemoratum ictum arripe ex eoque ferias, punge atque conscinde. Verum si dextro consistas contra hostem, isque celeriter adversum te laboret, avertes id passibus duplicibus ab utroque latere. Interim ferias transversarium brachiis instar crucis ordinatis versus latus dextrum capitis eius, et si eum acie longa adversarius propellet, tum inclina, atque supernis acie brevi ferias.

**The blow which in Latin takes its name from the Ox from the wrath of the oxen, from both sides.**

--For this blow you will conduct yourself in this way: place the left foot forward, and hold the sword with your hands crossed over your head; wind yourself, and step with your right foot on the right side of the opponent; if he perceives the sword hanging, strike the Thwart with crossed hands.

--But if he uses the same blow, parry, and simultaneously wind and extend the tip against his face or chest, and strike sharply against his head; if he parries it use a double blow with which you do not hit the body of the adversary [*German:* doubled Failer]. After this blow at once attack and from it strike, thrust and slice.

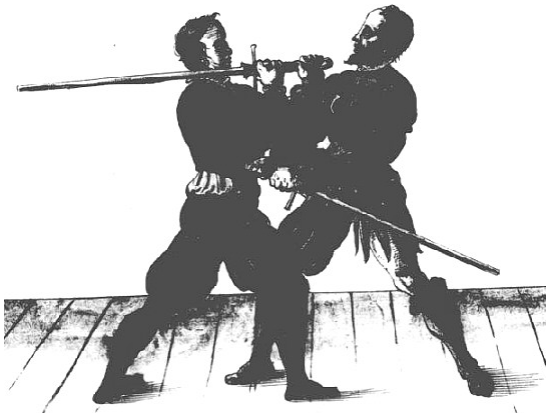
--But if you stand with the right foot against the enemy and he quickly works against you, parry it with double steps from both sides. Meanwhile, strike a Thwart with crossed arms against the right side of his head, and if your opponent sends it away with the long edge, let the weapon drop, and strike above with the short edge.

# Appendix: Additional Longsword Material from Mair by J. L. Forgeng (Draft Version)

**Taking Away Above and Striking to the Opening** (Vienna ms, 34r)

Item, when you come together in the Approach, stand with your left foot forward, and strike at his upper opening, follow after with your right thigh, and pull your blow back, then strike him quickly back in above at the right side of his head. If he parries this, then go up by his sword's blade with your sword—this is called "taking away above"—and thrust at his face; if you then step with your right foot against him, and hold your sword under your left armpit, and he thrusts at your face, then grab your blade in the middle, go with it up before your head, and push his point away with the Crown; thus you can jab your point at his face or breast; you can also strike at his head with the pommel. If he tries to strike at you thus with his pommel, then parry it also with the Crown, and thrust your point in his face, and strike him with your pommel at his head.

**A Face Jab along with a Side Jab (Vienna 41v)**



Item, when you come to the opponent in the Approach, stand with your right foot forward, and strike toward his right arm. If he parries this, then act as if you intended to strike in above at his face; meanwhile, jab with your pommel at his face.

If you become aware of this jab, then step with your right foot inside before his right, with your [head][1] through under his right arm, thus you go out from his jab, and jab at the same time with your pommel at his right side.

If his jabs thus at your right side, then set the false edge of your sword on his neck.

If you become aware of this setting on, then step back with your right foot, thus you can strike, slice, or thrust.

If he will thus meanwhile work at you, then work also with the foible and forte, so that you *regain the Before to his nearest opening.

**A Throw with a Thrust (Mair (Vienna) 45r)**

Item, when you come together in the Approach, then position yourself thus: stand with your left[2] foot forward, and strike in above at the same time as him; meanwhile, release your left hand from your pommel, and grasp the middle of your sword's blade; press his sword toward you with your hilt, and set your tip on his neck, thus you slice him; meanwhile press toward your left side, and lift his right lower leg up with your left, thus you cast him with the tip of your sword.

If he tries to cast you thus, and you have your right foot forward, then step with your left foot to his right side, push with your true edge strongly upward, your hilt over your head; thus you get out of his throw. Then pull your left leg back, and strike at his upper opening. If he parries that, then hang and wind, and thrust with your point at his face.

[Cf. this to Cgm 3712 122r]

[1] G *knopff*; L *caput*
[2] G *linggen*; L *dextro*